

UNITED STATES ARMY PARACHUTE TEAM

GOLDEN KNIGHTS

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KNIGHTS

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Being the goodwill ambassadors for the U.S. Army is a big job, one the U.S. Army Parachute Team, "Golden Knights" thrives on. Soldiers on the Golden Knights do their best work at 12,500 feet above the earth's surface, racing to the ground at speeds in excess of 120 mph and landing with smiles, ready to do it all again, in front of 20,000 spectators.



For more than 43 years the U.S. Army Parachute Team has been entertaining both young and old with precision parachute demonstrations.

In order to compete in the then communist-dominated sport of skydiving the 13-man Strategic Army Corps Sport Parachute Team was created in 1959.

The parachute team performed so well that on June 1, 1961 the Army officially recognized, designated and activated the team as the U.S. Army Parachute Team.

A year later the team adopted its nickname, "Golden Knights." Golden, signifies the Team's reputation of bringing home gold medals from skydiving competitions. Knights, indicate the Team had "conquered the skies" and alludes to the fact that Team members are champions of principle and conquest.

The Team earned the title of the Army's goodwill ambassadors to the world, by proving time and again that they are the best in the world.

The Golden Knights have performed more than 12,060 shows in all 50 states and 48 countries. Annually the Team performs more than 27,000 jumps before an estimated 12 million people.

The Golden Knights have a three-fold mission 1) to perform aerial demonstrations to

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the public, and promote the Army and its recruitment effort, 2) to compete in national and international parachuting competitions and 3) test and evaluate new parachuting equipment and techniques for improved operations and safety.

“The Team demonstrates skill, esprit de corps, team cohesion and discipline. We also represent the Army Values and are role models to all,” said Sgt. Maj. Michael R. Deveault, Golden Knights’ top enlisted Soldier.

The Team is composed of five sections: two demonstration teams, the Black and Gold Demonstration Teams and two competition teams, the Style and Accuracy Team, the Eight-way Formation Skydiving Team and the Tandem section.

In addition to the skydivers the team also has an aviation section, affectionately referred to as “Team Six” and the Headquarters element consisting of administration, operations, budget, media relations, parachute maintenance and supply.

The Black and Gold Teams perform two different shows, the Full Show and the Mass Exit. Both shows begin with one jumper exiting the aircraft at 12,500 feet and flying in the national colors. Once on the ground, he or she will then narrate for the duration of the show.

The full show consists of four maneuvers. The first being the baton pass: two jumpers exit the aircraft, meet in freefall and exchange a wooden baton, demonstrating the jumpers’ control of flight while falling at 120 mph.

Next is the intentional cutaway maneuver, where a single jumper demonstrates what would happen if his parachute malfunctioned. The intentional cutaway is the only solo maneuver of the show, but one of the most exciting.

The third maneuver is the diamond track. It is used to demonstrate the incredible amount of lateral movement a jumper can achieve while in freefall.

The final maneuver is the diamond formation. Four jumpers exit the aircraft





separately and fly their bodies to within inches of each other; forming a diamond in the sky, yet never making contact. At the team leader's signal the jumpers will separate, streak to the four points of the compass creating a beautiful bomb-burst effect, open their parachutes and fly safely to the ground.

The mass exit show has all jumpers exiting the aircraft and simultaneously performing one of many geometrical formations in the sky. Once the parachutes open the jumpers' land on target one-by-one.

The parachute competition teams, the Style and Accuracy team and the eight-way formation skydiving team, circle the globe competing in parachuting competitions, and fascinating the skydiving world with their record of 423 national champions, 66 world champions, 20 national and six world team titles. In addition to those accomplishments the team claims the only six-time world champion parachutist in formation skydiving. These impressive achievements have made them not only the most successful U.S. Department of

Defense sports team, but also the most successful parachute team in the world.

"The Style and Accuracy Team is deeply rooted in our history, forming the original team in 1959," said Lt. Col. Paul MacNamara, team commander.

In its fifth year, the Tandem Orientation Program, (TOP) has brought the American public closer to the Army and the sport of skydiving.

"The TOP exposes community influences and very important people to experience the thrill of a freefall parachute jump with minimal training. It also increases public awareness of parachuting safety and the professionalism of our jumpmasters," Deveau said.

The aviation section is the backbone of the parachute team. Those Soldiers ensure the teams arrive safely to their destinations and use their aircraft as jump platforms for shows. The pilot and crewmembers accomplish these important missions using a fleet of five aircraft and some of the best Army aviators.

The Headquarters section provides support for the team. These duties include show-scheduling, administrations, finance supply, parachute maintenance and media relations.

The headquarters mission enables the demonstrators and competitors to concentrate on putting on great shows and bringing home the gold.

A Soldier who wants to become a Golden Knight must first apply to attend the Assessment and Selection Program. Selection is held every year at the Team's home, Fort Bragg, N.C. Any enlisted Soldier can apply, however, only those who meet the demanding qualifications are selected.

All applicants must volunteer, have a minimum of 150 freefall parachute jumps, have a flawless military and civilian record and be willing to attend the Army's Airborne School, if necessary. The six-week Assessment and Selection Program tests parachuting skills, challenges the physical, mental and emotional states of the candidates and builds teamwork to help identify the best Soldiers for the team.



"The candidates' public speaking ability and their ability to promote professionalism are just as important as their parachuting skills," Devealut said. Besides performing for the world and competing, the team also spreads the word about what the Army has to offer.

"The Golden Knights raise Army awareness to the public, influence the younger generation to join the Army, reaching almost 20,000 people per show, on average. Through jumping and public speaking with the target audience we direct potential applicants to the on-site Army Recruiter," Deveau said.



The Army offers up to \$50,000 for college, up to \$65,000 for college loan repayment, and signing bonuses up to \$20,000 for qualified enlistees. Aside from the financial benefits the Army has to offer it also offers skills and experience in more than 200 job specialties.

"An Army of One" begins with each individual. Soldiers develop qualities and experience in high-tech equipment employer's look for in job candidates.